

The Jackie Robinson Foundation

The Honorable David Jacobson
United States Ambassador to Canada
c/o U.S. Consulate General Montreal
315 Place d'Youville, Suite 500
Montreal, Quebec H2Y 0A4

February 28, 2011

Dear Ambassador Jacobson,

Greetings to you and to all those gathered in Montreal for what I am certain will be a wonderful event marking the house where Jack and I lived in 1946 with a plaque from the United States Consulate. I'm sorry I could not join you in person for this commemoration.

I remember Montreal and that house very well, and have always had warm feelings for that great city. Before Jack and I moved to Montreal, we had just been through some very rough treatment in the racially biased South during spring training in Florida. We were still shaken from that experience and didn't know what to expect in Montreal. We knew that this was a noble experiment sponsored by Branch Rickey to integrate Major League Baseball against serious opposition, and Jack's shot at playing in the major leagues. We couldn't afford to fail. In the end, Montreal was the perfect place for him to get his start. We never had a threatening or unpleasant experience there. The people were so welcoming and saw Jack as a player and as a man.

I'm so pleased to hear that our old house is in good condition and being recognized today. We didn't know how we would be treated renting a house in a white neighborhood. A black family looking to rent in a white neighborhood in many parts of the world at that time would have been rejected. But on De Gaspé Avenue, we experienced nothing but kindness. The woman who owned the duplex we rented brought me inside the first day we met her, poured me tea, and insisted that when we lived there, she wanted us to use her things — her own linens and china. No one there spoke English, and we didn't speak any French. But they still treated us with respect. When it became noticeable that summer that I was pregnant with our first child, the neighbors all started watching out for me, coming by to ask me how I was doing and bringing ration coupons. That's the kind of experience we had in Montreal.

Thanks to you, the U.S. Consulate, and the people of Montreal for noting this piece of history. I hope it will help remind people of the struggles of the past, and the ongoing fight for racial equality and justice for all people.

Sincerely,



Rachel Robinson